

Near East
Palest.



The Arab Refugees - Road to a Solution

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the full text of a statement made by Ambassador Abba Eban before the U. N. General Assembly's Ad Hoc (Political) Committee on 18 November 1955



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The Arab Refugees – Road to a Solution

Four years have elapsed since the General Assembly established an Agency charged with the task of "reintegrating the Arab refugees into the economic life of the Near East". During that period the governments of our region, irrespective of their views on repatriation or resettlement, have been enjoined to secure "the permanent re-establishment of the refugees and their removal from relief"; to help convert them into productive members of Near Eastern societies; and to prepare them for a new life of dignity and freedom.

Today we confront a sombre picture of misery and deadlock. The number of those receiving relief has increased, and not diminished. Arab governments hold all the major rehabilitation projects at a standstill, or in suspense. The Arab governments which created this refugee problem by their brutal invasion of Israel seven years ago, now perpetuate its existence and deny the effective and merciful solution which lies well within their power.

Original Responsibility

This Committee would be fortunate if it could fix its eyes on the challenge of the future, rather than on the rancors of the past. The fierce denunciations of Israel by Arab representatives deny us any such prospect. Nor would it be just to contemplate so deep a tragedy without frankly facing the question of responsibility. Unless we understand how this problem was caused, we cannot wisely judge how it should be resolved.

The problem of the Arab refugees was caused by a war of aggression launched by the Arab States against Israel in 1948. The purpose of that aggression was first to prevent the State of Israel from coming into existence, and then to crush its newly established independence by armed force.

More than seven years have passed since that assault, but its memories are still vivid; its impression still profound. From the last day of November 1947 Arab forces had launched violent attacks upon our community with the avowed purpose of overthrowing the General Assembly's recommendation 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 by force. On the day of Israel's Declaration of Independence, which included a sincere appeal for friendship with the Arab world, the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, supported by contingents from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, crossed their frontiers and marched against Israel. Syrian tanks crashed into Upper Jordan. Lebanese and Syrian troops converged upon Galilee. Iraqi and Jordanian battalions pushed towards the coastal plain, and pressed us with our backs against the sea. Egyptian columns plunged into the Negev and crept northwards up the coastal plain to within twelve miles of Tel Aviv. Aircraft bombed our undefended cities. A ring of fire encircled us at Jerusalem and held its population in the grip of fearful siege. Villages were destroyed, farm settlements devastated. In all the areas of Palestine which came under Arab occupation not one single Jew survived.

Arab Governments understood well that their decision would take a fearful toll of life. The Secretary-General of the Arab League had grimly warned: "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre that will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacre and the Crusades". But the people of Israel, fighting for life and freedom against overwhelming odds, were not the only victims. Caught up in the havoc and terror of war, hundreds of thousands of their Arab neighbours sought the shelter of Arab lands. Their departure was powerfully incited by the Arab leaders who sought to clear the battlefield for the slaughter, after which their Arab kinsmen would return in triumph. In an interview given to a Lebanese newspaper, *Sada al Janub*, Msgr. George Hakim, the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Galilee, has recalled:

"The refugees had been confident that their absence from Palestine would not last long; that they would return within a few days—within a week or two. Their leaders had promised them that the Arab armies would crush the 'Zionist gangs' very quickly and that there would be no need for panic or fear of a long exile."

An Arab political leader, Mr. Emile Ghoury, Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, said with full candor on 15 September 1948:

"I do not want to impugn anyone but only to help the refugees. The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the action of the Arab States in opposing partition and the Jewish State. The Arab States agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem."

It is an astonishing experience to sit here year by year and to hear the governments which created this problem disclaim all responsibility for its solution. We suggest to Arab representatives that they should rightly face this Committee, not in tones of violent grievance but in an attitude of humility and repentance. Their governments assumed a grave responsibility by their decision to launch a war for Israel's destruction. The international conscience was profoundly shocked by that decision.

The dominant sentiment of the United Nations found expression in the words of the delegate of the United States who said in the Security Council on 22 May 1948, referring to the statements made by the Arab States:

"Their statements are the best evidence we have of the international character of this aggression. There is nothing in the resolution about aggression; it is a word which is not included in the text, but which has been mentioned in the statements of these aggressors . . . Of course, the statement that they are there to make peace is rather remarkable in view of the fact that they are waging war."

On 15 July 1948 the Security Council determined that the action of seven Arab governments had created a threat to international peace and security.

In December 1948 the United Nations—through its own representative Dr. Bunche—recorded its grave verdict of responsibility:

"The Arab States had forcefully opposed the existence of a Jewish State in Palestine in direct opposition to the wishes of two-thirds of the members of the Assembly. Nevertheless their armed intervention had proved useless. The (Mediator's) report was based solely on the fact that the Arab States had no right to resort to force and that the United Nations should exert its authority to prevent such a use of force."

These are amongst the documentary monuments of the Arab invasion. It has also left behind it the testimony of Israel's youthful graveyards; and the misery of Arab refugees is its living memorial. How monstrously do representatives of Arab States pervert the truth when they seek to lay responsibility for this tragedy at other doors! Those who launched the war are responsible, before history's bar, for all the suffering, misery, bloodshed and anguish which resulted from their fatal decision.

Nor is there any justice in ascribing the guilt to the United Nations, as some delegates have sought to do. The refugee problem was created, not by the establishment of the State of Israel, but by the attempt of Arab governments to overthrow that State by force. The crisis arose, not as Mr. Shukairy says, because the United Nations adopted a resolution in 1947; but because Arab governments attempted to overthrow that resolution and to frustrate its provision by illegitimate force. The United Nations should indignantly reject the charge of Arab governments that the United Nations is responsible for the creation of this tragedy. If the judgments of the United Nations had been peacefully accepted or even if opposition to them had simply been kept short of armed force, there would be no refugee problem hanging as a cloud upon the tense horizons of the Middle East.

Arab Attitude to Resolutions

The question of original responsibility is of more than historic importance. Once it is established that Arab governments have, by acts of policy, created this problem, it follows that the world community has an unimpeachable claim to invoke their full assistance in its settlement. This claim is all the more compelling when we reflect that Arab governments, in their own lands, command all the resources and conditions which would enable the refugees to be emancipated in full dignity and freedom.

After denouncing Israel for the crime of not having been defeated by the Arab assault, Arab delegates have occupied the Committee at great length with the idea that a solution may be found by the invocation of a single paragraph of a resolution adopted by the General Assembly seven years ago. The Arab gov-

ernments find no difficulty in disregarding the main provision of the 1948 resolution requesting them to negotiate a final settlement with Israel, and to cooperate with her in the economic sphere, while they loudly invoke another provision which they interpret as an unconditional warrant for repatriation, at the unfettered choice of the refugees.

There is no such absolute warrant for repatriation in the 1948 resolution. Under its terms, repatriation is specifically limited by two conditions. The first is practicability. The second is the existence of a situation in which Arabs and Israelis are likely to live peacefully as neighbours. It is clear from this very language that the General Assembly did not consider repatriation immediately practicable on 11 December 1948; and that a serious question arose in its mind with respect to the likelihood of peaceful co-existence between the refugees and the citizens of the country which they had left behind in the hour of crisis. These two conditions are far more remote today than they were in the more hopeful atmosphere of 1948. There is less practicability and less peace than there has ever been. All the available evidence has shown international opinion since 1948 as moving away from, and not towards, the idea of repatriation, which was regarded as problematical even in the terms of the 1948 resolution.

But, in any case, we find it difficult to take Arab representatives seriously as the austere and righteous advocates of the compelling force of General Assembly recommendations. Were they not the first governments in the history of the United Nations to take up arms for the forcible overthrow of a General Assembly resolution? A United Nations Commission reported on this question in the summer of 1948, in terms which have few precedents in the international literature of our time:

"Arab opposition to the plan of the Assembly of 1947 has taken the form of organised efforts by strong Arab elements, both inside and outside Palestine, to prevent its implementation and to thwart its objectives by threats and acts of violence, including repeated armed incursion into Palestine territory. The Commission has had to report to the Security Council that powerful Arab interests, both inside and outside Palestine, are defying the resolution of the General Assembly and are engaged in a deliberate effort to alter by force the settlement envisaged therein."

This assault by violence on the General Assembly's resolution led to its abandonment, and to new attempts to reach a settlement by direct agreements, first under the General Armistice System, which was to be followed, in the expectation of the General Assembly and the Security Council, by peace negotiations. Throughout this period Arab governments developed their doctrine on the nature of General Assembly resolutions. Here are a few quotations from statements by Syrian representatives:

"In the first place the recommendations of the General Assembly are not imperative on those to whom they are addressed."

"I fail to find in this Charter any text which implies directly or indirectly that the General Assembly has the authority to enforce its own recommendations by military force... the General Assembly only gives advice and the parties to whom advice is addressed accept it when it is rightful and just and when it does not impair their fundamental rights."

The views of the present Foreign Minister of Egypt are on record as follows:

"No one can say that compliance is imperative or that States which do not comply with Assembly recommendations are acting against the Charter or undermining the structure of the United Nations. No one can speak of the General Assembly's resolutions as if they were obligatory decisions... the Charter and the United Nations will not crumble, will not fall apart if one or more of the General Assembly's resolutions is not put into effect."

"We do not choose to comply with the General Assembly's resolutions on Palestine. This is our privilege under the Charter."

In defence of this Egyptian jurisprudence, Dr. Fawzi invoked eminent authority:

"We have seen that the United Kingdom Government does not intend to comply with the General Assembly recommendation (1947) for the progressive turning over of the Administration of Palestine to the United Nations Partition Commission."

Another Arab statesman, now the President of Lebanon, recorded similar views:

"The General Assembly's resolution of 1947 is a mere recommendation... it should be examined in the light of other recommendations of the General Assembly which have not been accepted by the country or groups of countries concerned and which have not been implemented."

I do not propose to go deeply into the merits of these contributions by Arab delegates to our United Nations jurisprudence. I seek only to explain why we cannot possibly regard them as the sincere and consistent advocates of General Assembly resolutions. Those who denied those resolutions any validity at the time of their adoption are surely incongruous when they now suggest the resurrection of these resolutions without any allowance for the transformations of the passing years. Our Arab colleagues show no disposition to respect the decisions of the Security Council on belligerency and blockade; or the resolutions of the General Assembly on the need for peace negotiations and for close economic relations; or the resolution of the General Assembly defining Israel's recognised sovereignty within the United Nations system. We shall not advance towards a solution of this acutely practical and intricate refugee problem by engaging in juridical debates with governments whose armed rebellion against United Nations policies is the original fundamental cause of the very crisis which we confront today.

The Re-Integration Effort

It would be more fruitful and constructive to summarize the reports of the Director of UNRWA and of his predecessors who have dealt with this problem since the establishment of the Agency five years ago.

Let us first understand clearly what the objectives of the Agency have been. The General Assembly, in its Resolution 393 (V) of 1950, called for the "reintegration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East." It advocated this reintegration on the grounds that it was essential "in preparation for the time when international assistance is no longer available, and for the realisation of conditions of peace and stability in the area."

Each year since 1950 the General Assembly has repeated its exhortations to the host governments to facilitate the reintegration into their economies of the refugees living on their soil; to offer them the opportunities of labor, education and free movement; to allow them to realise the opportunities existing in Arab economies for the beneficial absorption of refugees; and to co-

operate in new development projects to be financed with generous international aid. If the recommendations of 1950 and of subsequent years had been sincerely carried out, the refugees would now be the productive members of the Arab societies to which they are bound by every link of sentiment, language, culture and national loyalty. It is therefore grievous to record that the Arab governments have denied this salvation to their own kinsmen—preferring to maintain their refugee status undiluted and uncompromised for the sake of a sterile political controversy.

Thus, in January 1952 the General Assembly requested the host governments to assume the administration of the relief program. In the report to the Eighth Session (1953) the Director stated bluntly and accurately that the Arab governments had “been reluctant to assume the administration of the relief program in accordance with the wish expressed by the General Assembly in its Resolution 513 (VI)”.

Were the refugees granted the right to work in the Arab states, great numbers of them could have thus become self-supporting. In its report to the Sixth Session the Agency complained that “no Government except Jordan had proclaimed their right (of the refugees) to stay”, neither did subsequent reports register any progress in this respect.

Over a number of years, the Agency has striven to eliminate the barriers which prevent the refugees from moving freely and seeking their own fortunes in the kindred Arab World. This problem of freedom of movement for refugees is of crucial importance. Recent years have witnessed a great expansion of economic potentialities in the Middle East. Last year the revenues of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait from oil royalties alone amounted to 700 million dollars. This huge influx of wealth has opened up great opportunities of work and development into which the refugees, by virtue of their linguistic and national background, could fit without any sense of dislocation. There cannot be any doubt that if free movement had been granted, there would have been a spontaneous absorption of thousands of refugees into these expanded Arab economies. It is precisely this that Arab governments have obstructed. Thus in the report to the Eighth Session, the Director describes their policies in a highly significant passage:

"The full benefit of the spread of this large capital investment (in Arab countries) will be felt only if restrictions on the movement of refugees are withdrawn. This is a measure which was proposed in the original three-year plan, but little has been done so far to give effect to it. Such freedom of movement would enable refugees to take full advantage of opportunities for work arising in countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms where economic development has already taken place."

In other words, there are vast opportunities in the Arab world for the Arab refugees to build new lives, but Arab governments have so far debarred refugees from these opportunities.

Reduction of Refugee Rolls

In Paragraph 11 of Resolution 302 (IV) the General Assembly requested

"to continue to endeavor to reduce the number of rations by progressive stages."

Only one country cooperated with this crucial recommendation. In his interim report to the Eighth Session the Director, speaking of the failure to reduce the total number of refugees, found only one ray of light:

"Had it not been for the assumption by the Israel Government of responsibility for some 19,000 Arab refugees in Israel at the end of the previous year the number would have been still greater."

This integration of 19,000 refugees in Israel has saved the Agency an expenditure of \$600,000 for each year that has elapsed since then. By pursuing this same program in the ensuing year Israel brought the total number of Arab refugees which it fully integrated into its economy and citizenry up to the figure of 45,800. By all other means only 8,000 had been taken off the records up to last year.

If, in proportion to their own population and area, or by any other criterion or capacity, the Arab host countries had adopted a similar attitude towards refugees on their own soil, this whole problem would have begun to melt away. In view of the close cultural and spiritual bonds of the refugees with the Arab States, and the superior economic resources of these nations as compared

with Israel, it was surely not unreasonable to hope that Arab governments would have made it a point of honour to reduce the number of registered refugees each year, by integrating as many as possible into their economic and social life. Instead, the number has grown, and we are now faced with a suggestion for the further increase of the number of relief recipients by adding to them new and numerous categories.

Rehabilitation Prospects

The same record of obstruction has attended the rehabilitation schemes which the Agency tried to implement in cooperation with Arab governments. The thinking behind these programs is simple, but imaginative. The international community is ready to help Arab governments create opportunities of livelihood by irrigating new areas of land, establishing new farms, or in some cases, new village communities with industrial as well as agricultural activity. Refugees are to be placed into these newly created labor opportunities. The result would be a reduction of the number of refugees accepting relief, and progress towards lightening the international burden. The by-product would be the promotion of economic progress in Arab countries with international aid. It is hard to think of a more enlightened or progressive approach than this.

What has happened to these programs? They have been smothered by purposeful obstruction and delay. In his report to the Eighth Session the Director complains:

"Signs of progress on major schemes are lacking. The time taken to negotiate program agreements with governments has been far longer than what was expected when the three-year plan was originally conceived; it took 7, 9, 14 and 17 months respectively to conclude the four now in existence."

Today none of these schemes seem to be any nearer to implementation than they were two years ago. In October 1952 the Syrian Government had expressed readiness to cooperate with the Agency in the development of rehabilitation projects for the 85,000 refugees residing in Syria. Under the terms of the Agreement the Agency earmarked 30 million dollars for that purpose. Consecutive reports tell what has happened since the conclusion of the Agree-

ment. The Agreement itself lapsed after 31 December 1954 "as the Agency did not consider themselves justified in continuing to earmark such a substantial sum of money for projects in Syria in the absence of some indication from the Government of potential projects."

Great hopes were attached to the Sinai project under which refugees would have been settled on new land created by irrigation in the Sinai Peninsula. It now appears from Table 2, page 23 of the Director's report, that the agreement with the Egyptian authorities on the implementation of his scheme terminated on 31 March 1955 and has not since been renewed. We are left with a statement, welcome in itself, that the renewal of the agreement is "being contemplated."

For two years the governments of our region have discussed with Ambassador Eric Johnston a project for the coordinated use of the waters of the Jordan and the Yarmouk Rivers. If agreement is reached, many thousands of refugees will find an opportunity for bringing new land under cultivation, while the national product of certain Arab states would swiftly expand. Under this agreement the greater part of the Rivers Jordan and Yarmouk—the only two major rivers of which Israel is a riparian State—would be made available for Arab use. My Government has cooperated to the utmost with Ambassador Johnston in this project. Most of the technical problems involved in an agreed division of the waters have been solved. Now, after the investment of great effort during two full years we learn that certain Arab governments are still not prepared to say whether they are willing in principle, and as a matter of policy, to cooperate in any coordinated use of these rivers. The Director's report leaves us in suspense with the statement that "little further work can be undertaken pending decisions, mostly of a political nature, that have now to be taken regarding the division and storage of the Yarmouk and Jordan Rivers."

Not content with obstructing the main purposes of the reintegration effort, Arab governments have also impeded its organisational functioning. Successive reports over the past five years show these governments imposing illegitimate taxes and customs charges on the Agency; placing obstacles in the way of its transport; attach-

ing its funds; and withholding its proper judicial immunity in civil and criminal cases. The current Report shows 70,000 names improperly inscribed on the rolls in Jordan alone.

No wonder that Mr. Galloway, a former representative of UNRWA in Jordan, said to an American study group in Amman last year:

"It is perfectly clear that the Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations, and a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die."

The Triumph of Obstruction

Can anyone doubt that the Arab governments have been determined that the refugees shall remain refugees; and that the aim of wrecking any alternative to "repatriation" has been pursued by these governments with a skill and ingenuity worthy of a better cause? With an international Agency working for the integration of refugees, with tens of millions of dollars expended every year to move them away from a life of dependence, the Arab governments have brought us to a point where there are more refugees on United Nations rolls than ever before; and where their only new idea is to take thousands of indigent people who are not refugees at all—and put them on the international charge, thus swelling this problem beyond its already inflated proportions.

Resettlement—The Solution

But despite the frustrating record of these past five years, the resettlement of Arab refugees in Arab countries still shines forth as a solution of incomparable merit. Its logic and morality cannot be denied. It is not only that the Arab governments bear the responsibility inherent in their creation of this problem. Far more important is the fact that they are endowed with all the conditions for its solution. With its two and a half million square miles of territory, its vast resources of mineral wealth, its great unharnessed rivers and its uncultivated but fertile lands, the Arab countries are easily capable of absorbing what would be for them a relatively

small population. Moreover, resettlement in an Arab society would, for the refugee himself be "repatriation" in its truest sense. He would be united with peoples who share all his attributes of personality, his language, his spiritual heritage, and his system of national and cultural loyalties. "Patria" is not a mere geographical term. The resettlement of an Arab refugee in Israel would, paradoxically, be not "repatriation", but alienation from Arab society and transference to the only statehood in the area in which non-Arab loyalties and attachments predominate. For an Arab state, the refugee would be a reinforcement of its security; for Israel, he would be an inherent source of danger, since for seven years hostility to Israel has been the primary theme of his environment, this thought, his deepest sentiment.

Exchange of Population

The capacity of the Arab world to absorb this refugee population has been increased by the emigration to Israel of 350,000 Jews from Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and other Arab lands, who left behind them their homes, their property and their labor opportunities, and who have been proudly received in Israel, without any plaintive outcry or rush for international help. What could be more natural than that Arab countries such as Iraq, with its vast oil royalties and its chronic shortage of manpower, should absorb a like number of Arab kinsmen in the homes and labor opportunities thus vacated? The national revolutions of the Middle East have produced a two-way movement of population of Jews from Arab lands into Israel and of Arabs from Israel into Arab territories. The crucial difference is that Israel has made the effort and sacrifice to integrate its newcomers, while the Arab governments have deliberately obstructed integration in their territories.

If Israel, in its small area of 8,000 square miles and its pitifully limited resources could build houses, create work and provide citizenship for 800,000 destitute immigrants, nearly half of them from Arab countries, how much more easily could the vast Arab sub-continent with its 45 million people in eight separate sovereignties find homes for an equivalent number of its kinsmen?

The problem before us, acute as it is, should not be distorted beyond its true and manageable limits. It is not a vast or unpre-

cedented problem. The political changes which have taken place in the post-war period, including no less than five partitions, have produced a number of refugee movements. Thirteen million refugees in West and East Germany; fifteen millions in India and Pakistan; 400,000 Karelians in Finland; 350,000 Volksdeutsche in Austria; 2½ millions who moved from North to South Korea. In none of these cases was repatriation the answer to the problem. In each case the problem was solved because there was a co-national or co-religious host country which was willing to solve it. At an earlier date the Turko-Greek exchange stood as a triumph of enlightened statesmanship for solving a similar problem, in conformity with the essential loyalties and national sentiments of the refugees concerned.

With such a massive aggregate of advantages speaking for it, the doctrine of resettlement continues to advance steadily in international favor. Five years ago the representative of the United Kingdom pointed out that:

"The Arab refugees would have a happier and more stable future if the bulk of them were settled in the Arab countries."

Last year the representative of the United States appealed to Arab delegates to understand "that eventual solution of the refugee problem lay in a new and stronger economy for the Arab countries, coming to regard many of their refugee brothers as permanent members of the community and co-sharers in the Near East's future".

Many statements in this spirit are on the record. I do not say that those who have made them are in complete accord with us on the full measure and degree to which this solution should be applied. But it is true, to say the least, that the doctrine of resettling the Arab refugees in Arab countries is not an eccentric notion unilaterally held by Israel. It is the dominant theme of all serious international thought on this subject; and it makes progress in men's minds from year to year.

The Fallacies of Repatriation

It is all the more important that the advocacy of resettlement should be wholehearted and candid, and not compromised by

illusions. Israel was the victim, not the author, of the war which caused this tragedy. Yet not even the burdens, the preoccupations of self-defence or the herculean labors of absorbing a vast mass of immigration have turned our minds or hearts away from a disposition to bring our contribution to the relief of this distress. I have already referred to Israel's action in completely absorbing the 48,500 refugees who were on our soil when the 1950 reintegration resolution was adopted. With the legalisation of entries and the project for the reuniting of families, we have increased Israel's Arab population from 100,000 to 180,000 since the signature of the Armistice.

The United Nations Palestine Conciliation Commission has paid warm tribute to Israel's action in releasing bank accounts and deposits to the value of 11½ million dollars in favor of Arab refugees. While our neighbours maintained a ruthless economic warfare against us, we have authorised the transfer of hard currency from Israel to hostile territory.

It is recognised that the payment of compensation for abandoned lands could be an important contribution to Arab refugee resettlement. But, the acceptance of such a burden at any one time would involve our population in a commitment beyond its powers. We were therefore interested in a proposal made recently by the Secretary of State of the United States under which an international loan would be made to enable Israel to discharge this undertaking. My Government has, in recent weeks, responded formally and affirmatively to this suggestion.

It is evident, of course, that a discussion on the payment of compensation would require the solution and clarification of the related problems to which Mr. Sharett has referred in the Knesset. In particular, the Arab governments cannot attempt to stifle Israel financially by blockade and boycott—and at the same time expect Israel to assume heavy financial burdens for this and future generations of its citizens. The Arab governments will one day have to decide whether the pleasures of an illicit blockade are more to be cherished than the affirmative duty of enabling the refugees to receive compensation.

These efforts made by Israel in the past and contemplated for the future illustrate the earnest concern with which my Govern-

ment approaches the Arab refugee problem. The Committee will, therefore, understand that it is with a full sense of responsibility that I must make it clear that we cannot regard the further repatriation of Arab refugees in Israel as a solution to this problem. Let it not be forgotten that the refugees are members of the Arab world, and fully share the prevailing attitudes of Arab political life. It is enough to read the speeches of the Arab delegates and the representative of the Arab refugees, to reach the ominous conclusion that they are dominated by a passionate hatred of Israel and a desire to see her destroyed. There is unhappily, every evidence that their sentiments fully reflect the rancours and antagonisms of the refugees. Indeed, one of the Arab delegates gave us to understand that he was speaking for the refugees and on their behalf. It is beyond doubt that the Arab refugee population has been educated for eight years in the sheer hatred of Israel, and certainly not in loyalty and devotion to the Israel flag. The proposition that a sovereign state admit into its territory thousands of people who hold its flag, its ideals, its very statehood in profound and passionate disrespect, cannot be seriously entertained.

Two examples of Arab sentiment on this question will illustrate the kind of attitude which Arab refugees would now introduce into Israel. Prime Minister Nasser of Egypt has informed the world through an American newspaper:

"The hatred of the Arabs is very strong, and there is no sense in talking about peace with Israel. There is not even the smallest place for negotiation between the Arabs and Israel." (14 October 1955)

The Prime Minister of Syria has spoken in even more elevating language:

"Israel is Syria's avowed enemy. The Arabs will not rest as long as this thieving enemy still dwells on holy soil in the very heart of the Arab world." (20 September 1955)

The Committee will recall the persistent threats of the representative of Syria in this session of the General Assembly indicating clearly and frankly that the object of a refugee movement into Israel would be the destruction of Israel and its so-called "redemption" for the Arab rule. All statements made by refugee

leaders themselves are pervaded not merely by a lack of loyalty to Israel, but by a violent hatred of Israel's very existence.

Here then is our country with its embattled frontiers; the cherished sanctuary of the Hebrew spirit; the focus of so many deep universal sentiments; the product of infinite patience and toil. This small domain of sovereignty is savagely begrudged by a people whose territorial possession stretches out over a whole continent. Cut off from all land contacts; intercepted illicitly in two of its three maritime channels; subjected to blockade and boycott, to siege and encroachment, to infiltrations and commando raids; the object of an officially proclaimed state of war and the target of a monstrous rearmament campaign—this is the picture of Israel's security. No other State in the entire world faces such constant threats to its security and integrity. Can the mind conceive anything more fantastic than the idea that we can add to these perils by the influx from hostile territory of any number, large or small, of people steeped in the hatred of our very statehood? I do not believe that any responsible conscience will sustain such an idea. There could be no greater unkindness to an Arab refugee himself than to expose him to such an invidious role, perhaps reproducing the very circumstances which first made him a refugee. Observe another contradiction. On the one hand, Arab representatives tell you that it is intolerable for Arabs to live in Israel. On the other hand, they suggest that thousands of others should be driven back into this intolerable and explosive tension.

We seek the comprehension of this Committee in this elementary dictate of prudence and security. But above any other consideration, we remind the Committee that Israel is a sovereign State; and in exercise of that sovereignty it must apply its own authority and discretion to the question—who shall and who shall not enter its territory. Especially is this so in the present hour of national emergency. All other countries possess and apply a similar sovereign right. We are appreciative of the growing understanding which Israel's unique security problem has received in world opinion and throughout the organised international community.

The unreality of the repatriation concept can well be illustrated by reference to the Kingdom of Jordan whose representative addressed the Committee on 15 November. There are 500,000 new

citizens in Jordan. But Jordan has gained territory as well as population. It has acquired an area of 2000 square miles beyond its 1947 limits, and there is no indication that it will renounce a single square yard of it. Now these 500,000 are citizens of Jordan which in this respect has carried out the behest of the reintegration resolution. Many of them have risen to the summit of responsibility in the affairs of the Kingdom, and are numbered amongst its Ministers and leading officials.

Can it seriously be suggested that these naturalised citizens of Jordan, who are still on "Palestinian" soil, are potentially the citizens of Israel—that they have acquired a foreign citizenship and still retain a "right" of "repatriation" to Israel? The very idea is full of political and juridical confusion. It is true that their compensation rights exist and that there are grave economic problems resulting from their transference to Jordan. These require a solution with international help. But if Jordan would carry out the General Assembly's resolution of 1948 in favor of economic co-operation, including the common use of ports and highways; or if she would reach a settlement with Israel granting her free port facilities at Haifa, her commercial and financial position would be transformed and the addition of new wealth to new territory and new population would bring about a cumulative economic reinforcement to the benefit of the refugees. The improvement would become even greater if Ambassador Johnston's project received agreement. Here is a striking example of the anomalies of "repatriation" side by side with the broad practical advantages of an enlightened resettlement approach.

Freedom of Choice

The Committee will readily understand in the light of what I have said, why my Government cannot approve or endorse Ambassador Labouisse's proposal that a procedure of free choice between repatriation and compensation be offered to the refugees. It would, in our mind and conscience, be unmerciful and imprudent to encourage in the minds of these unhappy people any expectation which could not be fulfilled. Believing as we do that the resettlement of Arab refugees in Israel would hold grave perils both for Israel and the refugees themselves, we cannot in good heart en-

courage them to opt for frustration, tragedy and war. Moreover, the heavy, emphatic indoctrination to which they have been subjected for seven years, and the complete unlikelihood that we should be invited to the camps to explain Israel's position, rules out any prospect that a genuine freedom of choice is available. Finally, the suggestion is deficient in legal and international principle. It assumes the rights of individuals and completely ignores the sovereignty of States. It is quite improper for the question whether people shall or shall not enter Israel to be dealt with outside the framework of Israel's sovereign consent.

My delegation was frankly surprised to see the Director reach such a conclusion without consultation with the State most directly concerned. The Director's duties in the Arab world during the period of his mission have unfortunately left him no time even to visit Israel. A visit by him to our country would be most cordially welcomed, and would furnish a useful basis for including the Israeli aspect of the problem in any judgment or appraisal of its solution. He would certainly see at first hand that the prospect of Arab refugee resettlement in Israel is remote and full of dire perils, and that his task should be not to invite requests for such a solution, but rather to confront the refugees and the Arab governments with the necessities and advantages of early resettlement. Progress with the rehabilitation program; action on resettlement schemes and on water agreements; full cooperation with UNRWA in accordance with its mandate; utilisation of the expanding labor opportunities in the Arab world; serious discussion of compensation and related problems—these are the lines on which progress can be made in the coming year, rather than by attempting in these prejudiced conditions to "poll" the refugees on the question of their repatriation.

I doubt the necessity of commenting in detail on the Syrian representative's proposal for a three-power commission to devour Israel's territory and force the refugees back into what would remain of Israel after the operation. The Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly should be treated with more respect than the submission of such a proposal implies. Of course, no commission, large or small, is going to come to Israel to violate the existing territorial position which rests firmly upon contracts and agree-

ments reached at United Nations behest and witnessed by United Nations representatives. These Agreements, including their territorial provisions, are immutable in law and fact, except by procedures and principles of mutual adjustment laid down in the relevant articles of the Agreements themselves, i.e. in Articles VIII of the Syrian and Lebanese Agreements and Article XII of the Egyptian and Jordanian Agreements. Any talk of territorial changes outside the principles and procedures laid down in those Articles rests on unsound legal and moral foundations and is an irregular intervention in the bilateral relations of States. There is in general too much unconsidered talk on this territorial question. The present territorial position, resting on firm contractual engagements, is impeccably sound in law and justice. There is no juridical or political distinction whatever between the different parts of the territory within Israel's borders under the General Armistice Agreements. It is for the signatories of these Agreements to amend them if they so mutually agree and to do so by the procedures which they have agreed on, or to leave them unamended if they cannot agree to change them. So much for the legal position which deserves more understanding and respect. On the substance of the issue we have great difficulty in understanding why anyone should believe that Israel with its 8,000 square miles is too big; or why Arab states with their 2,700,000 square miles are too small. It seems a highly jaundiced, unchivalrous view, especially when it is expounded by those who are themselves content to rule vast expanses of territory, either within or beyond their national borders. It will do nobody any harm to leave Israel's 8,000 square miles alone.

These are anxious times for Israel and for the Middle East; and it is perhaps natural that patience sometimes collapses under the weight of concern, making way for plausible slogans or devices for swift cure. But there is no problem in which frank and steady thinking is more necessary than in this question of refugees. For their sake and for the sake of their region; indeed for the sake of peace which hangs in an unsteady balance, the General Assembly should give a strong impetus to the precise fulfillment of the great integration program which it initiated in its memorable resolution of 1950. Nor would it be inappropriate for the sentiment

of this Committee to be heard in loud volume on behalf of peace between the two kindred peoples, Israel and the Arabs, whose union of hands and hearts could inaugurate a radiant era for their common region. Can we not take our stand on the solemn covenants of agreement which we have freely signed, and advance beyond them to a lasting peace which would honour the traditions of our past and enhance the opportunities of our future?

